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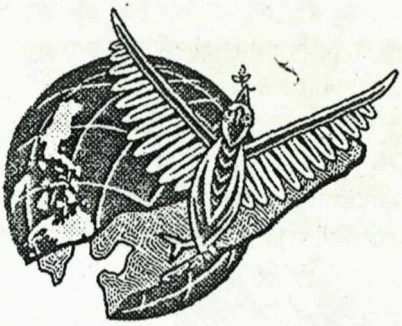

ASIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE ON EAST TIMOR (APCET)

The East Timor Issue

East Timor has been a pressing international issue since Indonesia "integrated" it as its 27th province in 1975 after Portugal abandoned its former colony in the midst of a civil war. Since then, the Timorese people have been waging a struggle for independence.

The struggle, however, is not without cost. To date, at least one third of the entire population have either been killed or disappeared. The most infamous of atrocities against the Timorese people was the Dili massacre of 1991 when at least 100 mourners in a funeral protest march were gunned down. Film of the massacre, filmed by a foreign journalist, was widely shown and resulted in public outcry especially throughout the western world.

These occurred despite repeated calls from the United Nations for Indonesia "to withdraw without delay all its forces" from East Timor. The UN Security Council resolution of 1975 likewise called on "all States to respect the territorial integrity of East Timor as well as the inalienable right of its people to self-determination..."

Despite all these, however, Indonesia's strong hand remains in control of the territory.

The Dili massacre, and the regular reports from Amnesty International and Asia Watch documenting human rights violations and atrocities facilitated the formation of various support groups particularly in Western Europe.

Asia-Pacific Conference

Part of Indonesia's stubborn stance on the issue may be traced to its close ties with its Asian neighbors, especially at a period when it is being looked upon as model for newly industrialized countries.

The Manila conference in May 1994 aims to bring the East Timor issue right to its own backyard, Asia, and more specifically, Southeast Asia.

Expected to be participated in by at least 200 delegates from all over the globe, majority of whom will come from the different non- governmental organizations and people's organizations in the region, the Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor (APCET) hopes to bring into focus the Timorese people's right to self-determination and consolidate its support network in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Program

The conference will tackle the legal, political and cultural dimensions of the East Timorese struggle as it tries to explore actions of convincing the Indonesian government to formally negotiate with the East Timorese people to finally bring freedom and justice to their bloodied Maubere nation.

Likewise, a comparative study of the struggles of other Asian peoples will be presented to put the East Timorese struggle in its regional perspective, further drawing parallels and possible concerted actions for solidarity and networking.

International luminaries and experts are invited to grace the gathering and make their presentations.

Why the Philippines?

Of all the Asian neighbors of both East Timor and Indonesia, only the Philippines can offer a relative democratic space vis the possibility of an unbridled media coverage without the danger posed in authoritarian and militarist governments.

Manila, the Philippines premiere city, is also a gateway to the Pacific offering access to both Asia and the rest of the world. Manila is also home to many

a dynamic people's organizations and NGOs concerned with human rights and people's struggles.

Beyond this, however, the Philippines and East Timor share many other similarities. The two countries are the only predominantly Catholic countries in the whole of Asia. Both were former colonies of Iberian powers, namely Spain and Portugal.

The Philippines also offers one of, if not, the most active people's movement coming from a broad spectrum of resistance in the whole of Asia.

The Philippine Convenors' Group

The idea for this conference was initiated by the various advocacy and solidarity groups for East Timor. Some of them will establish an international convenors' group that will steer the conference. A Philippine convenors group will host and organize the conference preparations.

The Philippine convenors group is composed of patriotic and internationalist personalities and representatives from a broad progressive formation. Among these are Bisig, Movement for Popular Democracy, Sanlakas, Confreedem, the Ateneo Human Rights Center and the Lean Alejandro Foundation.

Backstopping for administrative and secretariat function is the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), a professional Filipino international non-governmental organization working primarily for South-South solidarity and global education.

The Venue

The conference will be held at the University of the Philippines, the country's premiere state university and is generally acknowledged as the seat of progressive academic thought.

It lies northeast of the capital city of Manila, and an hour or so drive from the international airport and accessible to the various points of the metropolis.

The locale offers the tranquil of urban lifestyle while retaining the comforts and amenities of modern living.

Guests and participants will be billeted at the Philippine Council for Economic Development Hostel where three to four people will share a room.

Should a participant desire another type of accommodation, the secretariat must be informed beforehand.

Plenary Sessions will be held in the social hall which can accommodate 200 people in theater-type arrangement.

Workshops can be accommodated in four seminar rooms within a building. Should the need arise, other venues can be arranged within the campus.

Conference Fee

Each participant is requested to contribute a minimum fee of TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS ($200) to cover accommodation, food and materials.

Additional fee will be charged those who will request for special accommodation.

Off-Conference Meetings and Tours

For groups and individuals interested to come earlier and/or stay longer after the conference for their respective networking, dialogue with other parties, have an exposure among the basic sectors or simply make a tour of the Philippines, the organizing committee can help arrange meetings and facilitate accommodation.

Please fill-up attached form to signify interest and to ensure early arrangements. Expenses to be incurred during these activities, however, shall be borne by the parties involved. A minimal management fee shall be charged to defray costs of communication and personnel.

APCET Secretariat
#2 Matulungin Street
Central District, Diliman
Quezon City
Philippines
Telefax 921-6774